



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ASMFC Approves Addendum II to the Horseshoe Crab FMP *Addendum Provides for State-to-State Quota Transfers*

Arlington, Virginia – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission today approved Addendum II to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Horseshoe Crab. The Addendum provides for the voluntary transfer of harvest quotas between states to alleviate bait shortages on a biologically responsible basis.

“The Board feels confident that Addendum II will provide states with a reasonable opportunity to minimize bait shortages, while ensuring the conservation needs of horseshoe crabs and the shorebird populations which feed upon their eggs,” stated Board Chair Charles Lesser of Delaware.

In reviewing a request for a voluntary state-to-state transfer, the Addendum requires the Technical Committee and Management Board to consider the following criteria: the amount of transfer being requested; the amount of all previous transfers approved in that calendar year; and the impact that the transfer will have on Atlantic coastal horseshoe crab and shorebird populations.

In approving the Addendum, the Board also recognizes the critical importance of obtaining the information necessary to accurately assess the above criteria, including stock delineation and appropriate harvest levels. The states of New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland have committed \$125,000 to help address these information needs. Further, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has committed to providing approximately \$50,000 of additional funds for this effort.

Addendum II was developed at the request of the Commonwealth of Virginia, which asked for the provision as part of its efforts to come into compliance with Addendum I to the Horseshoe Crab FMP. Virginia originally balked at implementing the landings reductions required by Addendum I, but agreed to come into compliance last fall. At that time, it requested a change to the management program that would allow for voluntary transfer of landings quotas among the states.

Mr. Lesser continued by stating, “We have come a long way since the plan’s approval in 1998. Since that time, states have fully implemented mandatory reporting of horseshoe crab landings, have initiated long-term monitoring programs necessary for stock status information, and have made considerable strides in identifying important horseshoe crab habitat. Most importantly, states have collectively reduced their horseshoe crab landings in 2000 by 40 percent, exceeding the 25 percent goal established by Addendum I.”

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The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species.

The framework for managing horseshoe crabs along the Atlantic coast was approved in October 1998 with the adoption of the Interstate Horseshoe Crab FMP. This FMP required the States of Maryland, Delaware and New Jersey to maintain their current horseshoe crab harvest reduction strategies, and required all states to implement certain horseshoe crab research and monitoring programs in an effort to facilitate future management decisions. In February 2000, the Horseshoe Crab Management Board approved Addendum I to the FMP. Addendum I established a state-by-state cap on horseshoe crab bait landings at 25 percent below the reference period landings beginning in 2000, and established *de minimis* criteria for those states with a limited horseshoe crab fishery. Those states with more restrictive harvest levels (Maryland and New Jersey) are encouraged to maintain those restrictions to provide further protection to the Delaware Bay horseshoe crab population, recognizing its importance to migratory shorebirds.

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